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Geographical indication to be registered

Svensk Aquavit/Svensk Akvavit/Swedish Aquavit

Category of the spirit drink

Aquavit or akvavit

Description of the spirit drink

- Physical, chemical and/or organoleptic characteristics

Svensk Akvavit is a clear, sometimes tinted, drink with an alcoholic strength between 37.5% and
50% vol. It is flavoured with caraway and/or dill as well as fennel seed (Foeniculum vulgare Mill), obtained from a distillate of these spices, to which are often added other spices or flavourings. Depending on local traditions, the taste can vary from fairly discreetly to more intensely spicy, with no or only slight sweetness and with no or only slight bitterness. There is always a perceptible taste of fennel, which gives Svensk Akvavit the specificity that differentiates it from other spirits of the same category. The mixing of several spices is typical of the origins of this product and also contributes to making Swedish aquavit more complex and nuanced than other aquavits, which are often dominated by a single spice and rounded off with a sweet or bitter taste.

Svensk Akvavit is consumed unmixed at Swedish ‘smörgåsbord’ buffets and with starters and main courses during meals, usually in addition to another meal-time drink.

In addition to the general rules for aquavit in Regulation (EC) No 110/2008, Svensk Akvavit is also subject to the requirements below.

<u>Ethyl alcohol and its link with the geographical area</u>

All ethyl alcohol used to make Svensk Akvavit must have been produced in Sweden from wheat, rye, barley, oat or potatoes cultivated in Sweden. The ethyl alcohol has a neutral character and is pure, without the presence of any esters or aldehydes, which can sometimes be found in spirits. As the ethyl alcohol makes up about 30-40 per cent of the final product, the nature and quality of the raw materials are crucial. *Until well into the 19th century,*

agriculture in Sweden was typically subsistence farming. The Swedish climate, with its short, light and relatively cool summers and relatively long, cold and dark winters, provides special growing conditions. The Swedish climate affects the type of crops and cereals grown, the quality of the raw materials and the way they are handled. This in turn gives a unique quality to the raw material. Svensk Akvavit's reputation is based on the expectation that, traditionally, the spirit raw material is Swedish.

Spiced spirits and their link with the geographical area

The spiced spirits, including the caraway, dill and fennel distillates used as a flavouring, must have been produced in Sweden. The origin of the flavourings is not geographically limited, but may come from outside the territory of Sweden. This reflects the tradition of complementing indigenous spices with purchased goods. Since olden times, the mild, local leaf spices and aromatic herbs have been mixed with imported spices, which were richer in oils and taste, for example bitter orange, ginger and anise. Varying quantities of the selected spices are used depending on the quality of the raw material, which in turn may vary depending on the production area and weather conditions and on whether fresh or dried raw material is used.

Water and its link with the geographical area

The final product is adjusted to the desired alcoholic strength with water. This must take place in Sweden, though not necessarily in the same production plant where the spiced spirits *are produced*. Water makes up a good 50 percent of the final product and therefore plays a decisive role in the product's quality. *Sweden is known for its clean environment compared to other countries, for its rich water resources on land and in lakes and for its pure, high-quality water. Where groundwater is used in Svensk Akvavit, Sweden's climate and geology, in particular the* many *eskers created by the inland ice, contribute to the good availability of naturally pure, tasty and easily abstracted groundwater. The groundwater has a low content of organic substances, a good microbiological quality and an even, low temperature and requires only simple processing in the waterworks. In accordance with Swedish regulations, chlorination is limited. Sweden also has stricter rules for the presence of actinomyces in drinking water. However, it is not necessary for the water to come from an esker.*
Distillers have traditionally blended their aquavit themselves, and some distilleries still have their own well or spring. *Svensk Akvavit's reputation is based on the expectation that the blending with Swedish water traditionally takes place in Sweden. It is this crucial step that gives the aquavit its final character.*

- Specific characteristics (compared to other spirit drinks of the same category)

Swedish aquavit distinguishes itself from other aquavits for the following reasons:

a) The seasoning, which must include fennel seed, often in combination with other spices. This gives the product a unique and complex character. *Svensk Akvavit is flavoured with caraway (Carum carvi) and/or dill (Anethum graveolens) as well as fennel (Foeniculum vulgare). They must be distinguishable in the fragrance and/or flavour and contribute to the dominant character together with the other ingredients. The minimum measurable content of carvone (CAS: 99-49-0, 6485-40-1, 2244-16-8) must be 1.0 gram per hectolitre of 100% vol. alcohol. The minimum measurable content of anethole (CAS:*

104-46-1) must be 0.005 gram per hectolitre of 100% vol. alcohol. It must be possible to indicate the presence of fenchone in Swedish aquavit (CAS: 1195-79-5, 4695-62-9, 7787-20-4).

b) The production method of spiced spirits, which requires maceration and distillation in a pot still, unlike other aquavits, where you can work with fewer spices and may therefore choose to distil the spices together with the basic spirits.

c) The raw materials, which benefit from the Swedish climate and the conditions in Sweden.

d) The expertise and know-how of the distillers and blenders.

Geographical area

The territory of Sweden

Method for obtaining the spirit drink

There is a close link between artisanal craftsmanship, local farming conditions and the nature of the raw materials. The distiller must use all his expertise in order to control the entire distillation process and obtain the desired quality and characteristics.
The spices must be macerated in ethyl alcohol that has been diluted in water to a strength of between 40% and 70% by volume. The time interval may vary from 12 hours to up to 14 days, depending on the desired result. Varying quantities of the selected spices are used depending on the quality of the raw material, which in turn may vary depending on the production area and weather conditions and on whether fresh or dried raw material is used. The origin of the flavourings is not geographically limited, and the flavouring may come from outside the territory of Sweden. This reflects the tradition of complementing native spices with purchased goods. Maceration is a typical element of Svensk Akvavit. In other aquavits with fewer seasonings, the spices are often distilled directly with the basic spirits.

The spice mix must then be distilled in batches in a pot still. This has always been and still is a distinguishing traditional production method for Svensk Akvavit. The production method for the spice mix, which requires maceration and distillation in a pot still, is different than for other aquavits, where you can work with fewer spices and may therefore choose to distil the spices together with the basic spirits. The volatile fragrances and flavours of the spices are concentrated by distillation in a pot still in a way that produces a unique taste. The mixing of all the seasonings as well as any storage must take place in Sweden.

<u>The blending process and its link with the geographical area</u>

The quality and character of the aquavit are determined to a large extent by the blending process. Blending is a craft where the water, ethyl alcohol and spices are balanced against each other. The blenders, or master seasoners, are a proud professional group that guards tradition and expertise. Their competence and know-how guarantee that traditions are cherished without forgetting to develop Swedish aquavit. The master seasoners store the recipes, which are often kept partly secret and are unique for each aquavit. The blending must be done in Sweden.

Link with the geographical environment or origin

- Details of the geographical area or origin relevant to the link

History

Distillation know-how arrived in Sweden around the 1500s. It had to be adapted to the raw materials that were available in Sweden, in other words, the *cereals* growing in a northern climate. The product was usually called ‘brännvin’, a type of spirit drink. Once the cultivation of potatoes was introduced in Sweden, they, too, soon started being used to make ‘brännvin’. During wars and other times of deprivation, other raw materials have also been used, though they were always seen as emergency solutions of a lower quality.

Traditions for the use of flavourings developed early on, both to cover up the fusel taste often found in distilled spirits produced in former times and to obtain therapeutic effects from the active substances in the plants and herbs. The flavouring also offered greater variety for different types of food, occasions and consumers. The beverage was flavoured with native berries and culinary plants but also with spices and herbs that had reached Sweden through trade with distant lands.

In the past, the main purpose of ‘brännvin’ was to preserve the seasonal raw materials and facilitate the digestion of predominantly fatty, preserved or salty food. When it started being spiced and taken as a medicine, it was given the name ‘aquavit’. Indeed, the oldest recipes are found in medicine books. Gradually the term ‘aquavit’ evolved semantically to mean finer *spiced* ‘brännvin’. Other flavours have often been added to the basic caraway or dill taste. This rich variety stems from the differences that existed in olden times between producers, regional conditions and taste preferences. Fennel is present in nearly all the older Swedish recipes, which is not the case in neighbouring countries.

In the 17th century, the art of producing ‘brännvin’ was widespread. The medicinal link remained strong and the dissemination of expertise coincided with the expansion of the pharmacy network in cities. In rural areas it was the clergy that held distillation expertise. During this period, Swedish aquavit benefited from the use of strong and diverse spices.

In the 18th century, the pharmaceutical link weakened and Swedish aquavit secured its place in cookbooks. A cookbook by Kajsa Warg from 1755 contains around 20 recipes. A professional group with an exclusive right to distil came into being, and this further enhanced the quality of the product.

It was in the 19th century that Swedish aquavit received its familiar classical character. That is when distillation methods improved while production grew and competition became tougher. This put greater demands on distillers, who refined their recipes and took good care of their brands, which could be registered with the Swedish authorities. A common feature of the recipes preserved from those days is that they contain caraway and fennel. It was in those days that a basis for the link between aquavit and the Swedish ‘smörgåsbord’ buffets was established, and it persists to this day.

During much of the 20th century, the right to produce strong alcoholic beverages was held by a State monopoly in Sweden, and there were few developments in the production of aquavit. The manufacturing of such drinks was regulated principally by the State, which

governed the monopoly, and on the basis of agreements between the State and Sweden's farmers, primarily through the 1934 agricultural agreement but also through other regulations. The protected indication 'Svensk Akvavit' was introduced when Sweden joined the European Union. This also marked the end of the production monopoly.

Present status as a Swedish cultural symbol

Since the abolition of the production monopoly, the development of aquavit has enjoyed a new boom and the number of products has multiplied. Skilled distillers build on traditions but also contribute to innovation. Many of these products have the qualities of Swedish aquavit, as evidenced by the prestigious medals and distinctions they have been awarded. These developments have also led to new ways of thinking about aquavit. For example nowadays Swedish aquavit is both a meal accompaniment and an ingredient in recipes. The tradition of producing one's own aquavit has been taken up by restaurateurs throughout the country. It often has a local link and it has been adapted to local conditions and the local culinary culture. It is also used in innovative ways in the context of drinking - not just as a snaps but also as a component of drinks and cocktails, where it provides an exciting and a unique taste. Swedish aquavit is frequently present at various Swedish and international events and is often perceived as the essence of Swedish *drinking culture.*

- Specific characteristics attributable to the geographical area

The unique growing conditions in Sweden when it comes to climate and soil and the short summer months with long days and light nights determine the type of crops and cereals that can be cultivated and the way they are looked after. Sweden is on the Scandinavian peninsula. The climate varies between the different locations, but thanks to the Gulf Stream that crosses the Atlantic Ocean, the climate is milder than in many other places at the same latitudes. The winters are cold and dark, whereas the summer months have a gentle warmth and light nights.

Svensk Akvavit is a drink with strong traditions in Sweden. The experiences and expectations of consumers regarding the product depend on whether they perceive it as traditional and genuine. *Svensk Akvavit's reputation is based on the expectation that the product must be Swedish. Svensk Akvavit's Swedish identity traditionally means that its production takes place in Sweden and that the raw materials, including the water and ethyl alcohol, are of Swedish origin.*

European Union or national/regional provisions

Regulation (EC) No 110/2008

Applicant

Sweden

Supplement to the geographical indication

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Specific labelling rules

Svensk Akvavit must be labelled with at least one of the following indications: ‘Svensk Aquavit’, ‘Svensk Akvavit’ or ‘Swedish Aquavit’.

By reserving the protected indication ‘Svensk Akvavit’ for aquavit where every step in the manufacturing process takes place in Sweden in compliance with traditional Swedish requirements, it is possible to reduce the risk of consumers being misled. For aquavit whose production is linked to Sweden but that does not meet all of the requirements for Svensk Akvavit, there is the possibility to express the link to Sweden on condition that the rules on indicating the country of origin in different markets are followed.